

Weapons Retention and Disarming Techniques

Title:	Weapons Retention and Disarming Techniques
Lesson Purpose:	To present to law enforcement, courtroom, and transportation officers basic, practical, and effective techniques along with subject control methods for combating weapon disarming attempts.
Training Objectives:	<p>At the end of this block of instruction, the student will be able to achieve the following objectives in accordance with the information presented during the instructional period:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Explain the force option concept.2. Explain the concepts of reasonableness and perception as they relate to force option selection.3. Describe the differences between non-lethal and lethal force options.4. Discuss an attempted disarming of an officer as a lethal force issue.5. Compare and contrast the concepts of Redirect, Control, Attack, and Takeaway as they relate to disarming an assailant.6. In a practical setting, demonstrate techniques to stop/control attempted disarming attacks with the officer's weapon both in and out of the holster.7. In a practical setting, demonstrate handgun takeaway techniques from the front and rear.
Hours:	Four (4)
Instructional Method:	Lecture/Conference/Practical Skills
Materials Required:	Pen/Pencil Student outline Red Gun or other similar training aid Duty belt
Training Aids:	PowerPoint slides with embedded video LCD/Screen/Computer Overhead projector Strike bags and pads Gymnastic mats Training and collapsible batons Handcuffs with keys DVD/Monitor

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- References:
- Combs, John and Dave Cloutier. "Subject Control & Arrest Techniques." *Basic Law Enforcement Training Manual*. Salemburg, NC: North Carolina Justice Academy, 2006.
- Davis, Kevin. "The Triad of Handgun Retention – How to Retain Your Sidearm and Save Your Own Life." San Francisco, CA: Policeone.com, April 26, 2007. [Online]. Available at: [http://www.officer.com/web/online/On-the-Street/The-Triad-of-Handgun-Retention/21\\$35847](http://www.officer.com/web/online/On-the-Street/The-Triad-of-Handgun-Retention/21$35847) [April 2007].
- Floyd, Craig W. "It Ain't Exactly Like What You See on the TV." *American Police Beat*, March 2003, 38.
- Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989).
- "Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted 2005." Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2006. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/killed/2005/table14.htm> [April 2007].
- Scott v. Henrich*, 39 F.3d. 912 (1994).
- Smith, Larry. "Use of Force." *Use of Force Instructor Certification Manual*. Twin Lakes, WI: National Criminal Justice Training Council, 2002.
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Use of Force*. Glynco, GA: Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, January 2006.
- U.S. Department of Justice. *Violent Encounters – A Study of Felonious Assaults on Our Nation's Law Enforcement Officers*. Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2006.
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North Carolina Justice Academy
- Date Prepared: June 2007

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Title: Weapons Retention and Disarming Techniques – **Instructor Notes**

1. This in-service lesson plan must be presented by an instructor currently certified by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission as a “Specialized Subject Control & Arrest Techniques Instructor.”
2. This lesson plan contains new techniques that all Subject Control/Arrest Techniques (SC/AT) certified instructors may **NOT** be familiar with. Instructor updates are not mandated, but attendance is strongly encouraged. The Weapon Retention and Disarming Techniques Instructor Update will cover all techniques and will allow the instructor to practice and become proficient with the new techniques.
3. There is a test which has been provided in the event that this training is delivered in a format other than the traditional classroom. The instructor can develop their own testing if he/she chooses. Testing is **NOT** required when traditional delivery is conducted.
4. This lesson plan is designed to provide those trainees enrolled in the In-Service Training Program with the knowledge and skills necessary to utilize the techniques taught in a reasonable manner. Agencies and instructors are encouraged to supplement this lesson plan with any information or practical exercise(s) they feel are necessary to accomplish their individualized training objectives.
5. The allotted time for this lesson is four (4) hours. Instructors should structure their classroom presentations so as to spend approximately one hour in the classroom covering academic material before proceeding to the practical skills portion.
6. This lesson requires lecture and demonstration on the part of the instructor and practice on the part of the student. It is recommended the student practice techniques until deemed proficient by the instructor.
7. Arrangements must be made for an area suitable for this type of activity, complete with protective mats, to reduce the chance of physical injury.
8. It is recommended that students participate in a physical conditioning program prior to subject control training. In addition, subject control classes should be preceded by a period of "warm-up" and "stretching" exercises.
9. Students should wear loose fitting clothing appropriate for subject control training to allow for movement and safety, to include footwear.
10. During student skills training, students should strive to perform all of the steps in each of the techniques in a smooth, fluid, and continuous motion.
11. Subject Control/Arrest Techniques Safety Rules:

Subject control techniques to be learned and practiced are potentially injurious and if performed in a haphazard manner, could result in serious injury. To minimize the risk of injury, the following health and safety precautions should be observed in training situations:
 - a) Remove all watches, rings, glasses, earrings, necklaces, etc., that might be snagged during training.

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- b) All floor mats and pads must be cleaned using a 10:1 (water/bleach) solution after every use. Refer to OSHA requirements for more information.
 - c) No "horseplay." Practice only what is taught and demonstrated.
 - d) All techniques must be practiced slowly at first. Speed and proficiency will come with continued practice.
 - e) During application of the various techniques, only passive resistance should be offered. Active resistance can enhance injuries and impede training.
 - f) It is recommended that the practical skills portion maintain a 1:8 instructor-to-student ratio as outlined in Administrative Code 12 NCAC 9B .0202(b)(4).
12. The PowerPoint presentation includes embedded video clips. If you are utilizing equipment for this training that technologically does not support these video clips, you may secure these video clips from the North Carolina Justice Academy. Videos may be purchased from the NCJA Bookstore on DVD or VHS or may be checked out on loan from the Audio-Visual Section of the Library.

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I. Introduction

NOTE: Show slide, “Weapons Retention and Disarming Techniques for 2008 In-Service Training.” Greet class, introduce self and provide background information.

A. Opening Statement

During the course of their normal duties law enforcement officers encounter from time to time various levels of subject/offender resistance. The reasons for this resistance vary with each incident. Resistance can be physical, verbal, and even psychological in nature. The following material will give the student basic and practical information and skills in weapon retention and disarming techniques. Even though the methods and techniques are basic and generally reliable, continued practice is recommended.

B. Training Objectives

NOTE: Show slides, “Training Objectives.”

C. Reasons

If an officer cannot maintain control of a duty weapon, it cannot only be useless but also a liability. Even an officer who is proficient with the weapon can lose control of it. At every scene an officer responds to there is a weapon that becomes available to the strongest and quickest person. Officers have repeatedly mentioned the need to practice weapon retention as, by far, one of the most important training points that they learned. In some cases, they attributed such training to saving their lives.¹

II. Body

A. Use of Force in Arrest, N.C.G.S. 15A-401

1. Subject to the provisions of subdivision (2), a law enforcement officer is justified in using force upon another person when and to the extent that he reasonably believes it necessary:

NOTE: Show slide, "Non-Lethal Force."

“A less-than-lethal force option is one which is highly unlikely to cause death or serious injury to a suspect when properly applied by a law enforcement officer.”²

- a) To prevent the escape from custody or to effect an arrest of a person who he reasonably believes has committed a criminal offense, unless he knows that the arrest is unauthorized; or
- b) To defend himself or a third person from what he reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of physical force while effecting or attempting to effect an arrest or while preventing or attempting to prevent an escape.

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The use of force by law enforcement officers is an issue of great concern to society, individual officers, and law enforcement administrators, alike. The determination of the propriety of the use of force in a particular case is often an after-the-fact, subjective judgment based on not very specific standards. State laws and departmental rules and procedures are intended to define more clearly those standards of professional behavior which will benefit the public and the law enforcement officer.

Despite what may be the public's perception, use of force situations involving law enforcement officers are very infrequent. According to a recent U.S. Department of Justice study, out of over 44 million calls for service, traffic stops, and other contacts between law enforcement and the public during 1999, in more than 99 percent of those contacts no force of any kind was used.³

2. For the law enforcement officer, the amount of force which may be employed in attaining the law enforcement purpose will be determined by surrounding circumstances. The U.S. Supreme Court has imposed a "reasonableness" standard to determine the propriety of an officer's use of force, which takes into consideration all surrounding circumstances.

Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386, (1989)

NOTE: Show slide, "Reasonableness . . . *Graham v. Connor*."

"The test of reasonableness under the 4th Amendment is not capable of a precise definition or mechanical application... Its proper application requires careful attention to the facts of each particular case, including the severity of the crime at issue, whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the officer or others and whether or not he is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight . . .

The reasonableness of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight . . .

The calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgments-- in circumstances that are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving--about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation."⁴

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- a) Reasonableness must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, coping with a tense, fast evolving situation.
- b) Decisions must be based on the totality of the circumstances and how they are evolving at the time of the incident.
- c) Determining the amount of force required to control a subject requires sound decision making by the officer. Crucial to this ability is the officer's understanding of the force options, and the reasonableness of the force option(s) used.

3. Perception

NOTE: Show slide, "Perception."

Essential to the officer's understanding of force options is an examination of "perception." In selecting force options, an officer's perception of what is taking place is critical. Officers must look at each situation or the "totality of the circumstances" and continually assess, plan, and act. What one officer may perceive as a threat, another may not, due to any number of factors. This means that when the reasonableness of an officer's actions is being questioned, we must place ourselves in the position of that officer at the moment of decision. Reasonableness is not determined by any particular force option(s) but rather all of the surrounding circumstances that caused the officer to make the decision on the force option(s).

The following elements of "objective reasonableness" are listed below and are based on the officer's perception of the subject's actions.⁵

NOTE: Show slide, "Elements of Objective Reasonableness."

- a) Ability/Capability – Addresses the ability/capability of a subject to carry out the action or threat. This must be a logical perception.
- b) Opportunity – Indicates that the action or threat perceived by the officer is imminent. The subject must be in a position in which they can use their *ability/capability* to carry out the act or threat.
- c) Intent – Indicates the mental state initiating an overt act (words or deeds). Intent is initiating an overt act in furtherance of a crime or threat.

4. Under no circumstances should the force used be greater than necessary, and in no instances will deadly force be used except in the situations provided by statutory law and departmental regulations. A law enforcement officer is justified in using deadly physical force upon another person:

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NOTE: Show slide, “Deadly Force.”

- a) To defend himself/herself or a third person from what he/she reasonably believes to be the use or **imminent** use of deadly physical force.
- b) To effect an arrest or to prevent the escape from custody of a person who he/she reasonably believes is attempting to escape by means of a deadly weapon, **or who by his/her conduct or any other means indicates** that he/she presents an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to others unless apprehended without delay.
- c) To prevent the escape of a person from custody imposed upon him/her as a result of conviction for a felony.

The rules on use of deadly force under North Carolina law will not permit the use of deadly force against a person accused or suspected of committing a crime who is attempting to escape from custody or arrest **unless his/her conduct presents an immediate threat of death or serious injury**. Nothing in this subdivision constitutes justification for willful, malicious, or criminally negligent conduct by any person which injures or endangers any person or property, nor shall it be construed to excuse or justify the use of unreasonable or excessive force.

Note: This situation would primarily apply to correctional officers in preventing an escape from a prison unit.

B. Force Option Model

A force option model should be used as a *guide* for officers in their use of force decisions. These decisions should be based upon generally accepted responses to use of force situations.

Determining the appropriate amount of force to use when confronting a resistive subject can be problematic for the officer. Frequently, policies are ambiguous in directing the officer in the appropriate amount of force to use.

While it is certainly advantageous for an officer to resolve a confrontation with verbal direction, it is at the point where words no longer serve to de-escalate a confrontation and force must be used that many standard policies and guidelines become vague.

NOTE: Show slide, “Force Options.”

NOTE: Instructors should thoroughly explain the force option model. In particular, instructors should explain this model from the inside-out, taking care to point out that there is not a clear line distinguishing when a suspect moves from one level of resistance to another. And, that the color areas representing force options overlap one another based on the same premise.

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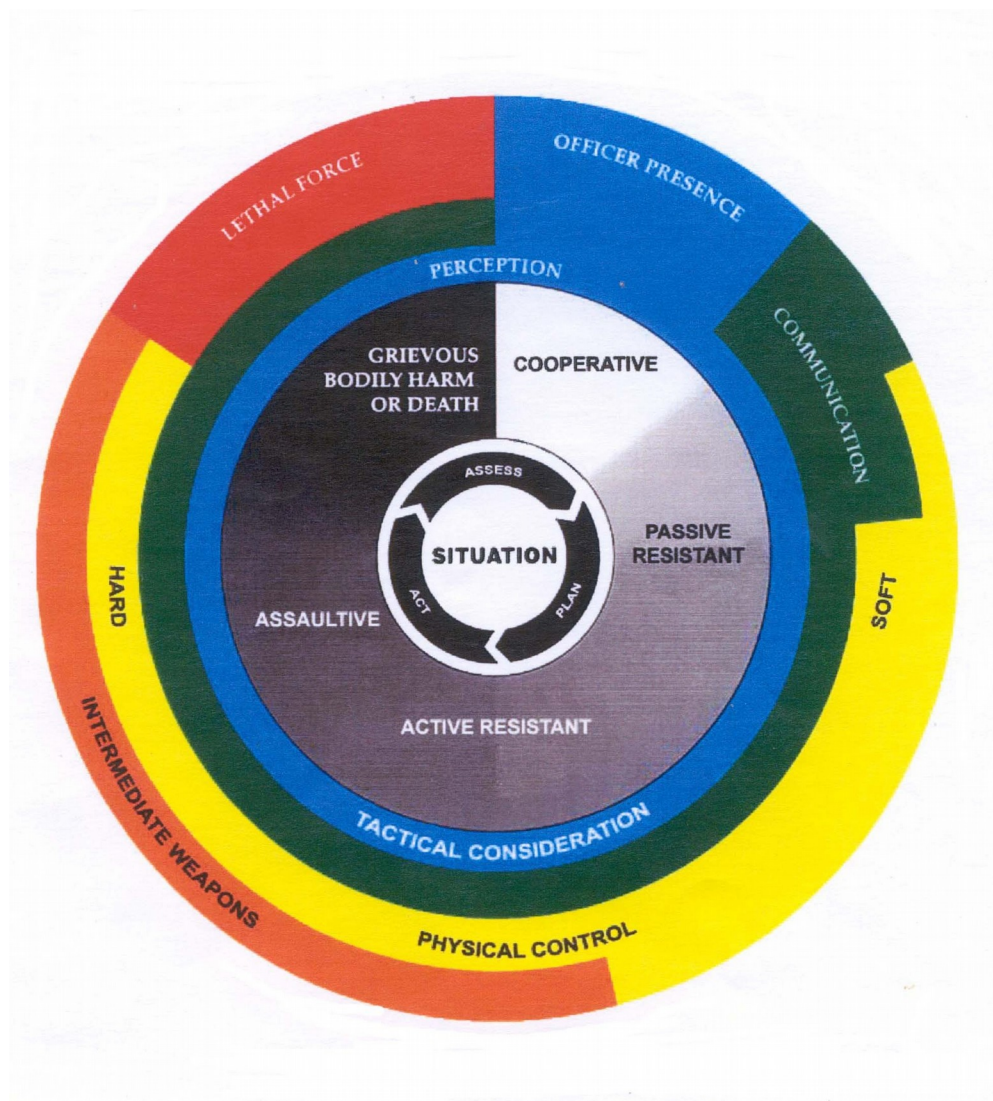
Most use of force options are listed from the least life threatening to the most life threatening. The appearance of a hierarchy or specific order to employ any force option is unintended. The systematic listing of force options is only used to clarify and illustrate the variety of applications. The “continuum,” as it is sometimes called, ***IS NOT*** a specific path for officers to follow in every situation. Any perceived pecking order or tier has nothing to do with the officer’s individual thought processes for choosing the most reasonable option. In *Scott v. Henrich* (39 F.3d. 912; 9th Circuit - 1994) the court said:

“Requiring officers to find and choose the least intrusive alternative would require them to exercise superhuman judgment. In the heat of battle with lives potentially in the balance, an officer would not be able to rely on training and common sense to decide what would best accomplish his mission. Instead, he would need to ascertain the least intrusive alternative (an inherently subjective determination) and choose that option and that option only. Imposing such a requirement would inevitably induce tentativeness by officers, and thus deter police from protecting the public and themselves. It would also entangle the courts in endless second-guessing of police decisions made under stress and subject to the exigencies of the moment.

Officers thus need not avail themselves of the least intrusive means of responding to an exigent situation; they need only act within that range of conduct we identify as reasonable.”⁶

Simply stated, officers do not have to exhaust other lower levels of force options before selecting a particular force option(s), so long as the option(s) is reasonable.

Remember: The evaluation tool used by the court is, “Did the officer act as other reasonable officers would have acted in a similar situation?” (*Graham v. Connor* [490 U.S. 386, 1989])



1. Control levels

NOTE: The instructor should provide various examples of the involved factors of each level of the continuum as they are presented to the student.

NOTE: Show slide, “Control Levels.”

- a) Presence: psychological force established through the officer's arrival on the scene and symbols of authority (badge, uniform, etc.) Officer positioning, stance, and use of a reaction zone aid in the control of confrontations and facilitate officer safety.
- b) Verbal Direction/Control: conversation, advice, commands, or instructions utilized by the officer to control or de-escalate a confrontation. Verbal communication, when applicable, should accompany officer actions, including the officer's identification

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and announcement of arrest as outlined in N.C.G.S. 15A-401(c) (2).

- c) Physical Control: use of physical contact to include touching, assisting, grabbing, joint manipulations, kicking, or striking. Such contact includes empty hand techniques and does not include the use of intermediate weapons.

- (1) Soft hand control - Techniques which have a low probability of injury, such as joint locks and pressure points.

Note: Stunning techniques to the neck (brachial plexus origin, suprascapular nerve) are appropriate in cases of aggressive assault and high level resistance of a manner that approaches a threat to the officer's life.

- (2) Hard hand control - Techniques which have a higher probability of injury, such as punches, kicks, or stuns, from "personal weapons."

- d) Aerosol/Chemical Agents: The use of Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) or other agents to control suspect resistance. Agents typically target suspect's facial area, cause moderate discomfort, activate mucus membranes and reduce resistance.

Note: The use of an aerosol chemical agent, such as OC pepper spray, has a legitimate place in force option selection. Exact placement may be dictated by departmental policy. Individual agency policy may provide for the use of OC pepper spray before any touching or "soft hand" techniques under specified circumstances, or may require the use or attempted use of "soft hand" techniques before spraying if circumstances permit.

- e) Electronic Impulse Device (EID): Also known as "stun gun" or TASER, these devices deploy electronic currents (low watt, high volts) into a suspect's body. This affects the central nervous system and causes muscles to involuntarily contract, thereby decreasing or eliminating suspect resistance.

Note: The use of an electronic impulse device (EID) has a legitimate place in force option selection. Exact placement may be dictated by departmental policy. Individual agency policy may provide for the use of an electronic impulse device before any touching or "soft hand" techniques under specified circumstances, or may require the use or attempted use of "soft hand" techniques before deploying if circumstances permit.

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- f) Intermediate Weapons: weapons which when utilized according to recognized training methods reduce the probability of serious bodily injury.
 - (1) Low-level intermediate weapons - Weapons used with slow pressure not requiring dynamic impact or physical exertion (Example: using a baton to effect a joint lock).
 - (2) High-level intermediate weapons - Weapons which involve strikes or could cause temporary physical incapacitation when applied (Example: baton strike).

Note: Placement of particular intermediate weapons in force option selection may vary from agency to agency depending upon respective guidelines.

- g) Deadly Force: actions which would likely result in death or serious bodily injury including the use of lethal weapons.

Note: The force option selection model is a guide. An officer's use of force is a response to the subject's behavior and does not specifically follow a preset order of escalation or de-escalation. An officer must continually assess a subject's behavior to allow for appropriate escalation/de-escalation in the use of force.

NOTE: The instructor should provide practical examples or relate actual situations in which sequential use of levels are not followed. Example: An officer encounters a subject armed with a handgun. Officer presence has been established and the officer might begin utilizing verbal commands. The officer would not engage in physical controls, nor would he employ the use of an intermediate weapon such as a baton strike. The officer should seek appropriate cover and prepare to utilize lethal force as assessed from the subject's behavior.

2. Subject behavior/resistance levels

NOTE: Show slide, "Subject Resistance Levels."

A subject may exhibit various types of behavior during the arrest process. The subject may respond to arrest by the following types of behavior:

- a) Compliance: the subject may comply with officer directions and voluntarily submit.
- b) Noncompliant resistance: the subject may offer **passive** or **active** resistance in an attempt to thwart the officer's arrest actions. In this type of behavior the subject is not actively attempting to injure the officer, but attempting to prevent

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physical restraint or control. These actions might include behavior such as holding onto a steering wheel, lying prone on the ground with both hands under the body, pulling away or attempting to flee from the officer. (This latter type of **defensive resistance** is the most common noncompliant behavior.)

- c) Assaultive: the subject may engage in assaultive behavior through actions such as strikes, kicks, or balance disruption which would cause injury to the officer. (Over 80% of assaults involve subject's use of personal weapons, i.e., hands, elbow, feet, etc.)

NOTE: Show slide, "Personal Weapons."

- d) Aggravated assaultive: the subject engages in assaultive behavior with the use of a weapon which could lead to serious injury or death. This would be considered a lethal/deadly force encounter.

Note: Officers are likely to encounter a combination of types of behavior. Although the subject might be attempting flight or exhibiting resistive behavior, he may begin striking the officer to effect his release, thus changing to assaultive behavior.

3. Force continuum factors/variables

NOTE: Show slide, "Force Variables."

The amount of force an officer employs in effecting control or defending himself/herself is generally guided by **the totality of the surrounding circumstances**, including, but not limited to, the following:

- a) Subject behavior - physical and verbal actions, signs of impairment
- b) Totality of the circumstances - known factors
- c) Environmental conditions - lighting, location, weather, terrain
- d) Reaction time/distance from subject - effective response
- e) Multiple subjects/officers
- f) Size and gender of the officer and subject
- g) Skill level of officer - physical ability/condition, training level
- h) Apparent skill level of suspect - physical appearance, demonstrated ability

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- i) Age of subject/officer
- j) Injury or exhaustion - physical impairment of officer
- k) Weapon availability - officer's issued weapons, weapons in the immediate area
- l) Availability of alternative actions - disengagement, use of multiple officers
- m) Previous knowledge of subject - previous behavior, use/possession of weapons

C. Handgun Retention/Takeaway

NOTE: Show slide, “Handgun Retention/Takeaway.”

1. Statistics

- a) In 2005, the latest year for which stats are available through the FBI, of the 50 officers killed feloniously with firearms, **6 law enforcement officers were killed with their own weapons. Over the last 10 years more than 10% of officers killed in the line of duty by firearms were killed with their own duty pistols** (the high year was 2003, in which 11 of the 45 officers were killed with their own pistols, totaling 24%). Numbers only tell part of the story and are cold and impersonal. These incidents include:⁷
 - ▶ Officer James Prince from North Carolina, killed with his own pistol during a traffic stop.
 - ▶ Sgt. Hoyt Teasley from Georgia, killed after a suspect assaulted another deputy and obtained a duty pistol while in a correctional facility.
 - ▶ Detective Sergeant James Allen from Rhode Island, disarmed and killed while interviewing a suspect inside police headquarters.
 - ▶ Lt. James Weaver from Virginia, killed by a juvenile suspect during a prisoner transport.
 - ▶ Deputy Claudia Killebrew from Montgomery County (TN) Sheriff’s Office was attacked and disarmed by a female assailant while responding to a call. The assailant fired two shots at Deputy Killebrew—the deputy sprayed the assailant with pepper spray and recovered her weapon.

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- ▶ In Cleveland, a suspect grabbed an officer's gun at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport and shot another patrolman in the chest at the United Airlines ticket counter after ticket agents called about the suspect's behavior.
- b) Each officer was assaulted during a different type of call or assignment in different parts of this country while working for agencies large and small, and the officers were shot with their service pistol or a handgun of a coworker. When talking about officers killed, these numbers have names and each officer killed leaves family, friends and coworkers wondering what, if anything could have been done to prevent these tragedies.
- 2. Officers should be made aware that an attack which includes an attempt to disarm an officer should be considered a lethal force confrontation. Therefore, the officer is justified in using proportional force (up to and including lethal) to respond to the attack.
- 3. Officers should also regularly check the condition of their leather gear/duty equipment. No holster system is fool proof and is potentially the weakest link in a weapon retention situation. No matter what “threat level” holster is worn by an officer, it can fail or be damaged during a confrontation. If an officer’s holster is damaged, worn, or seemingly defective, it should be replaced immediately.
- 4. When training weapon retention and weapon disarming techniques, officers should use holster systems/duty rigs and weapons that duplicate their own.

NOTE: No functional firearms should be used in class. Practice weapons should be plastic or metal models of the student’s service weapons or a service weapon that cannot be fired. Weapons should be checked before class for maximum safety.

- 5. Technique considerations⁸

NOTE: Show slide, “Technique Considerations.”

Regardless of the setting, the fundamentals of an attempted disarming of an officer are essentially the same, as are the officers’ technique/force option considerations. Whatever method(s) we revolve our survival training around, it must be:

- a) Based on gross motor skills;
- b) Practiced properly and regularly; and
- c) Able to be recalled under high stress.

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We should also have plans for when we are on the ground, and an attempted disarm is made by an assailant, regardless of position. Remember, physical skills follow the law of diminishing returns, which states that the farther from the training event you get, the less able you are to perform the skill. Even without a training partner, you can and should practice securing the pistol in the holster and affecting the release, which builds a motor program that can be reverted to under stress.

You're in a fight for your life! Secure the weapon, position, effect the release, then get distance and draw your pistol. Never, ever give up!

6. Handgun retention methods (in-holster)

The following techniques come from Krav Maga and are more realistic, forward-moving, and less “ability-based.” Krav Maga is not a traditional martial art. It was developed in a hostile environment in which combatants could not devote many hours to hand to hand combat training. Therefore, the Krav Maga system was created to bring students to a high level of proficiency in a relatively short period of time.

Krav Maga training stresses the ability to react when surprised. Techniques and training methods emphasize the ability to function from a poor state of readiness, and to move from a passive to aggressive state immediately in order to fight back and survive.

NOTE: Show slide with embedded video containing an introduction to handgun retention and handgun takeaway techniques.

NOTE: Show slide with embedded video of handgun retention/takeaway techniques (10 minutes). Show video before demonstrating the techniques.

NOTE: It may also be appropriate for the instructor—during this phase of the presentation—to show the video of each of the techniques in the mat room individually, prior to hands-on practice.

a) Frontal attack

- (1)** The officer traps and pushes the weapon into the holster while dropping center of gravity.
- (2)** As the assailant attempts to pull the weapon out, the officer moves into the assailant—closing the gap—and strikes the assailant repeatedly enough to loosen the assailant’s grip (or effect the release).
- (3)** The officer can then strike the assailant’s wrist in a sweeping motion—either from the inside or outside—to effect the assailant’s release of the weapon.

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b) Side/rear attack

- (1) The officer traps and pushes the weapon into the holster while dropping center of gravity, and turning toward the assailant.
- (2) As the assailant attempts to pull the weapon out, the officer turns further into the assailant—closing the gap—and strikes the assailant repeatedly enough to loosen the assailant's grip (or effect the release).
- (3) The officer can then strike the assailant's wrist in a sweeping motion—either from the inside or outside—to effect the assailant's release of the weapon.

Note: The type and manner of strikes to the suspect will depend on the officers' skill, perception of effectiveness, and position.

c) Side-mount attack (from the non-gun side)

- (1) If the officer is supine and the assailant attempts a disarm by reaching across the officer's body from the side, the officer traps and pushes the weapon into the holster.
- (2) The officer will raise the upper body enough to be able to bring the non-gun hand/arm underneath the assailant's arm, wrapping back over, and placing the palm of the hand on the back of his/her own head (this creates a modified trap of the assailant's arm).
- (3) The officer will roll toward the shoulder closest to the suspect, and into a prone position—maintaining control of the weapon.
- (4) The officer strikes the assailant repeatedly enough to loosen the assailant's grip (or effect the release), allowing the officer to disengage and stand.

Note: If the assailant attempts a disarm from the gun side of the officer, the officer traps and pushes the weapon into the holster and rolls on his/her side toward the assailant (using the ground to help retention). The officer can then deliver repeated strikes to the assailant to effect the release and disengage.

d) Full-mount attack

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- (1) If the officer is supine and the assailant attempts a disarm from a full mount, the officer traps and pushes the weapon into the holster.
- (2) The officer will raise the upper body enough to be able to bring the non-gun hand/arm underneath the assailant's arm, wrapping back over, and placing the palm of the hand on the back of his/her own head (this creates a modified trap of the assailant's arm).
- (3) The officer will raise the hips and roll toward the shoulder closest to the suspect, and into a prone position—maintaining control of the weapon.
- (4) The officer strikes the assailant repeatedly enough to loosen the assailant's grip (or effect the release), allowing the officer to disengage and stand.

7. Handgun retention methods (weapon drawn)

NOTE: For safety in training, the student playing the assailant should always grab the weapon with both thumbs pointing toward the officer. This will help reduce potential elbow injuries.

a) Frontal attack

- (1) As the assailant grabs the weapon, the officer off-sets the assailant's balance by turning the weapon "up."
- (2) The officer can follow-up with shin kicks to the femoral area of the assailant.
- (3) The officer will then pull the weapon into the shoulder opposite the officer's gun side (or step in) and strike the assailant's wrist with the shoulder, while at the same time pulling the weapon out of the assailant's grasp.

Note: If the weapon is pushed up and back by the assailant, the officer should use caution if attempting a kick as this may compromise balance. The officer should step off-line and repeat the Frontal Attack retention technique.

b) Side attack (from the officer's gun side)

As the assailant grabs the weapon, the officer will pull the weapon into the shoulder opposite the officer's gun side (or step in) and strike the assailant's wrist with the shoulder, while at the same time pulling the weapon out of the assailant's grasp.

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Note: If the assailant attempts a grab from the officer's non-gun side, the officer should off-set the assailant's balance by turning the weapon "up." The officer should step off-line and repeat the Frontal Attack retention technique.

8. Handgun takeaways

An officer must remember several things before attempting to remove a weapon from a subject. The officer's ability, distance from the subject, environment, and time are just some factors. The officer should attempt to communicate as much as possible, before any removal is attempted. However, in those situations when time is of the essence and the officer has no time to talk, action must be taken. The following handgun takeaways are basically the same. The only difference is one takeaway is from the front and one is from the rear.

The following takeaway techniques follow the principles of Redirect, Control, Attack, and Takeaway. Redirect means redirecting the weapon away from the officer's body. Control means to maintain a solid grip on the weapon, axis forward, and up on the balls of the feet. Attack means to deliver repeated strikes to the assailant. Takeaway means for the officer to remove the weapon from the assailant's grasp.

NOTE: Once the weapon is re-directed, the focus should then switch to the assailant—we have to do something to make the assailant not want to continue to hold the weapon. This must be accomplished with hard, fast strikes to the assailant. If we do not do this, the assailant will also focus strictly on the weapon (remember, at that point the assailant is also fighting hard), and the stronger more balanced person will be dominant.

a) Frontal assault

- (1) As the gun is presented, the officer grabs the weapon sharply and "drives" it down while "blading" the body, so that the officer is out of the line of fire. The officer should already be putting weight down on the weapon by leaning into it and coming up to the balls of the feet.

Note: As the officer redirects, the other hand can already be coming up to punch, palm strike, elbow, etc., but it should be close to your body so that it is not in the line of fire.

- (2) As the officer bursts in, keeping weight on the weapon, he/she should deliver repeated strikes to the assailant using a closed fist, palm of the hand, and/or elbow/forearm (multiple strikes may be necessary). Always make sure the weight stays on the weapon!

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- (3) To take the weapon away, the officer slides the hand along the body (to avoid the line of fire); reaches down and under the weapon, and grabs at the hammer or back of the slide. The officer rotates the gun sharply 45° to “break and take” it from the gunman’s grasp.

NOTE: This may break the gunman’s finger. In training DO NOT let students put their fingers in the trigger guards.

- (4) As soon as the weapon is completely in the officer’s possession, the officer retreats to a safe distance, and moves to appropriate control (if this is the officer’s weapon, be sure to “tap and rack” it, since the disarm may have caused a potential malfunction).

Additional Notes:

Once out of the line of fire, the officer must not allow any part of the body to go back in.

The officer is not racing against the pull of the trigger, but rather the assailant’s recognition of movement, and his reaction to that movement. Therefore, initial redirections must involve the least detectable moves possible.

The technique described above works in most instances where the handgun threat is in front of the officer. If the gun is pointed at the head, the only difference is that we make an earlier body defense by moving the head even before the hand has reached the gun.

These are extremely high-risk techniques that should be used when the officer feels that serious physical injury or death is imminent.

b) Rear assault

- (1) As the threat is applied, the officer must look quickly to the rear. What is touching the body is not as great a concern as where the weapon actually is.
- (2) Leading with the arm, the officer should turn deeply enough to redirect the weapon and take the body out of the line of fire. If the gun is held low, the arm will make the redirection, along with the body defense. If the gun is held high on the back (or head), the arm will have little or no effect, and the officer will mostly make a body defense.

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- (3) While stepping very deep, the officer will bring the “leading arm” up, wrapping attacker’s arm, and bring the fist tightly to the chest to secure the forearm holding the gun.
- (4) With the opposite arm, deliver an elbow strike to the assailant’s face/head. As the elbow strikes are delivered, the officer can slide his/her arm back to secure the wrist of the assailant.
- (5) Follow with knee and/or shin strikes to the lower body closest target areas of the attacker (thigh, lower leg, groin, or abdomen).
- (6) To take the weapon away, the officer should push the shoulder forward and with the off hand, reach over the weapon, pinky up, and grab the barrel. Snap down hard with the elbow to break the assailant’s grip, while pushing the shoulder (not whole upper body) forward.

Note: The officer should be sure that the hold on the wrist is strong. Press the fist to the chest. Push the shoulder forward (not the whole upper body). There should be no gaps or spaces which would allow the assailant to pull the weapon away (“handcuff principle”).

- (7) As soon as the weapon is completely in the officer’s possession, the officer retreats to a safe distance, and moves to appropriate control (if this is the officer’s weapon, be sure to “tap and rack” it, since the disarm may have caused a potential malfunction).

III. Conclusion

A. Summary

NOTE: Show slides, “Training Objectives.”

During this block of training, officers reviewed principles of force, force option selection, reasonableness, perception, and force variables in a classroom setting. During the practical skills portion of this block, officers were able to experience and practice several handgun retention and takeaway techniques from a variety of positions both standing and grounded, with the weapon in the holster and with the weapon drawn.

B. Questions from the Class

C. Closing Statement

Weapons Retention and Disarming Techniques

Mental awareness is first and foremost the best way to prevent attempted takeaways. You should maintain, whenever possible, a safe reactionary gap but when inside this distance (where the vast majority of police shootings actually take place and where all takeaways occur) be prepared for resistance and ever cognizant of your pistol. Try to keep your gun hand free whenever you can. Don't get so caught up in the business of a call that you fail to see the warning signs and body language that indicate a suspect's preparation to attack. If someone attacks and attempts to disarm you, more important than any other component is your will to win. Despite possible injuries, possibly being smaller, not as physically strong or even being outnumbered, you can and must win the fight for your life and retain your pistol.⁹

TRAIN HARD, STAY FIT, STAY ALIVE!

NOTES

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, *Violent Encounters – A Study of Felonious Assaults on Our Nation’s Law Enforcement Officers* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation, August 2006), 106-107.

²

Larry Smith, “Use of Force,” *Use of Force Instructor Certification Manual* (Twin Lakes, WI: National Criminal Justice Training Council, 2002), 3.

³ Craig W. Floyd, “It Ain’t Exactly Like What You See on the TV,” *American Police Beat*, March 2003, 38.

⁴ *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989).

⁵ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Use of Force* (Glynco, GA: Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, January 2006), 19.

⁶ *Scott v. Henrich*, 39 F.3d. 912 (1994).

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“Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted” (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005) [On-line] Available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/killed/2005/table14.htm> [April 2007].

⁸

Kevin Davis, “The Triad of Handgun Retention – How to Retain Your Sidearm and Save Your Own Life” (San Francisco, CA: Policeone.com, April 26, 2007) [On-line] Available at: [http://www.officer.com/web/online/On-the-Street/The-Triad-of-Handgun-Retention/21\\$35847](http://www.officer.com/web/online/On-the-Street/The-Triad-of-Handgun-Retention/21$35847) [April 2007].

⁹

Ibid.